

Coins

Among collectors, rarity prices and popularity on rise

By Roger Boye

THE PRICES of some rare coins have shown handsome increases in recent weeks, at least partly the result of renewed interest among dormant collectors.

Both major coin newspapers have reported that collector enthusiasm is strong with coin shows and auctions around the country well attended. As Numismatic News said in an analysis of the coin market, "The economic news is causing more and more investors to consider the field of rare coins."

Silver dollars are one type of coin currently in vogue, with several dealers reporting difficulty purchasing enough uncirculated dollars to keep up with demand. Even the typical dealer buying price for a circulated silver dollar with high mintage has moved upward. Most dealers will pay at least \$4.25 for a common-date silver dollar in very good condition, about 50 cents more than what they would have paid just four months ago.

Other coins showing price increases are key date Washington quarters from the 1930s in uncirculated condition; 1936 and 1937 proof coins; and the Barber dimes, quarters, and halves, especially those in the top conditions. Collectors are receiving about 3½ times face value for their common-date silver coins, a modest increase compared with the price levels of six months ago.

Of course, rising prices in the past do not guarantee future increases. Indeed, some dealers believe prices may have peaked for the time being, especially for silver dollars.

A CHICAGO broadcaster, Donn Pearlman, has written and produced a five-part series on coin collecting to be aired this week on WBBM News Radio.

The shows, designed to acquaint

noncollectors with the hobby, will include interviews with prominent collectors and information about determining the condition of coins.

Pearlman is well qualified to talk about coin grading. Early last year, he ordered coins from 16 mail-order firms and with the help of several Chicago-area coin dealers found that four of the firms reportedly sold circulated coins as uncirculated. The radio series Pearlman wrote on that investigation won an award from the Professional Numismatists Guild, an organization of coin dealers.

Each coin program this year will be aired four times (9:25 a.m., 4:25 p.m., 8:10 p.m., and 12:10 a.m.) beginning tomorrow morning. Pearlman, who collects coins and is a member of some collector organizations, also narrates the series of five-minute programs.

THE RADIO programs are appropriate this week, National Coin Week, as coin collectors all over the nation will be setting up displays and giving talks about this greatest of hobbies. National Coin Week is sponsored by the American Numismatic Association, and the theme this year is, most appropriately, "Happiness is coin collecting."

One such lecture will be given by Norman M. Davis, author of a syndicated coin column and "The Complete Book of U.S. Coin Collecting" published by Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

"My talk will be aimed mainly at the noncollecting public and the people on the fringes," said Davis, who moved to Chicago from Maryland last October. The speech begins at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Rogers Park branch of the Chicago Public Library, 6907 N. Clark St. The library also will have some coins and coin books on display this week.